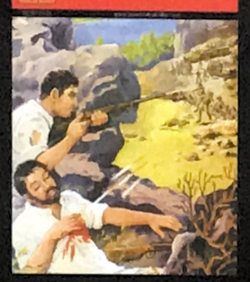
THE RANI OF KITTUR

When Chenamma, the queen of Kittur, lost her only son she was steeped in sorrow. But when her husband reminded her that even the people of Kittur were her children she pulled herself together and devoted her life to their well-being. So committed was she to the honour and welfare of her land that when the British came asking for its allegiance she took on their military strength and fought them to the end.

OTHER ACK BRAVEHEARTS:



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BRAVEHEARTS

AMAR CHITRA KATHA

THE RANI OF KITTUR

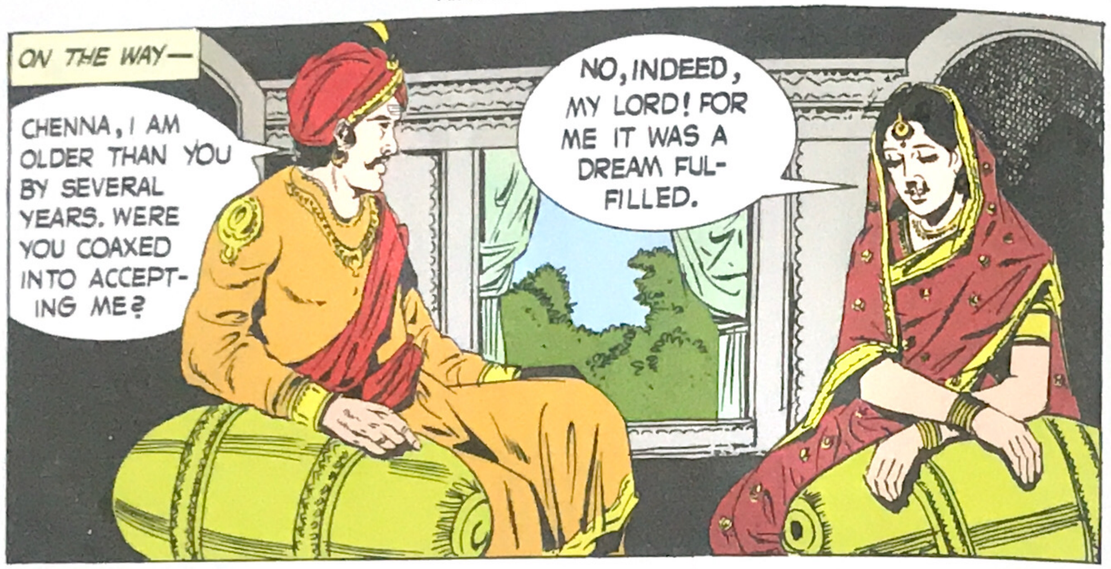
THE DEFIANT QUEEN

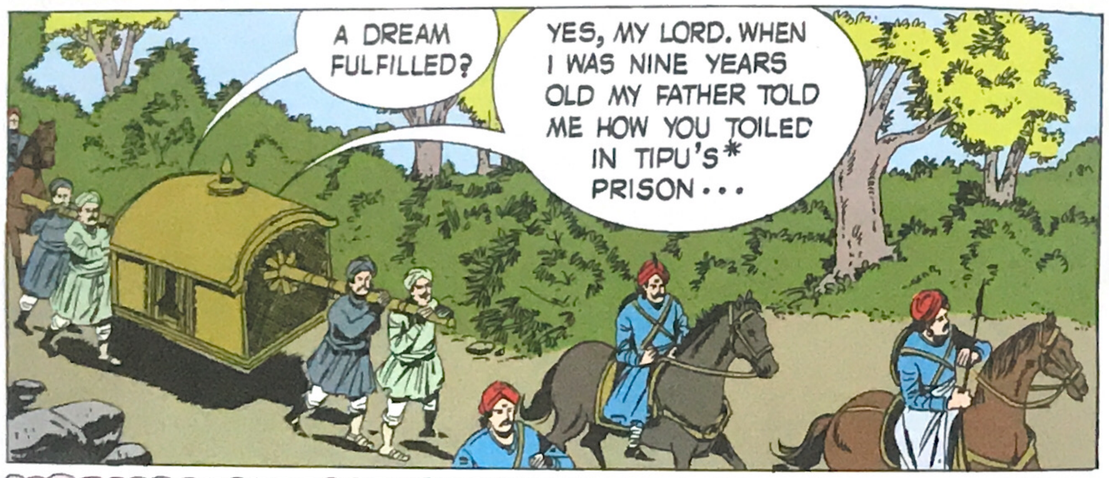
Vol 748 | ₹50

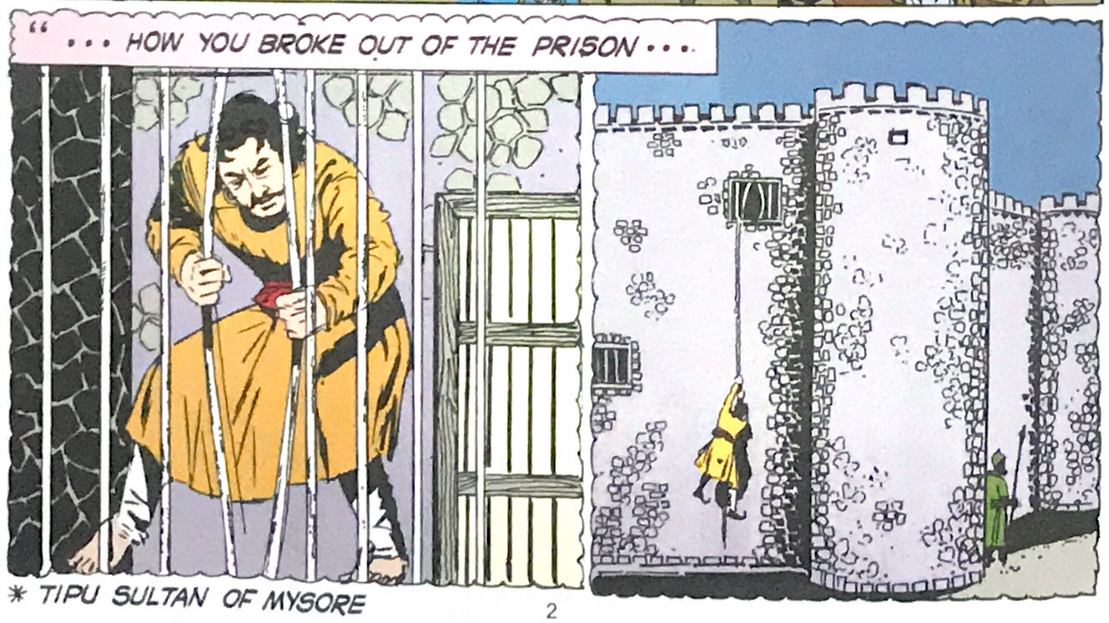
THE RANI OF KITTUR

WHEN CHENNAMMA, THE DAUGHTER OF DHOOLAPPA GOWDA, THE DESAI *OF KAGATI,卐 MARRIED MALLASARJA, THE KING OF KITTUR,卐 SHE WAS BARELY SIXTEEN.

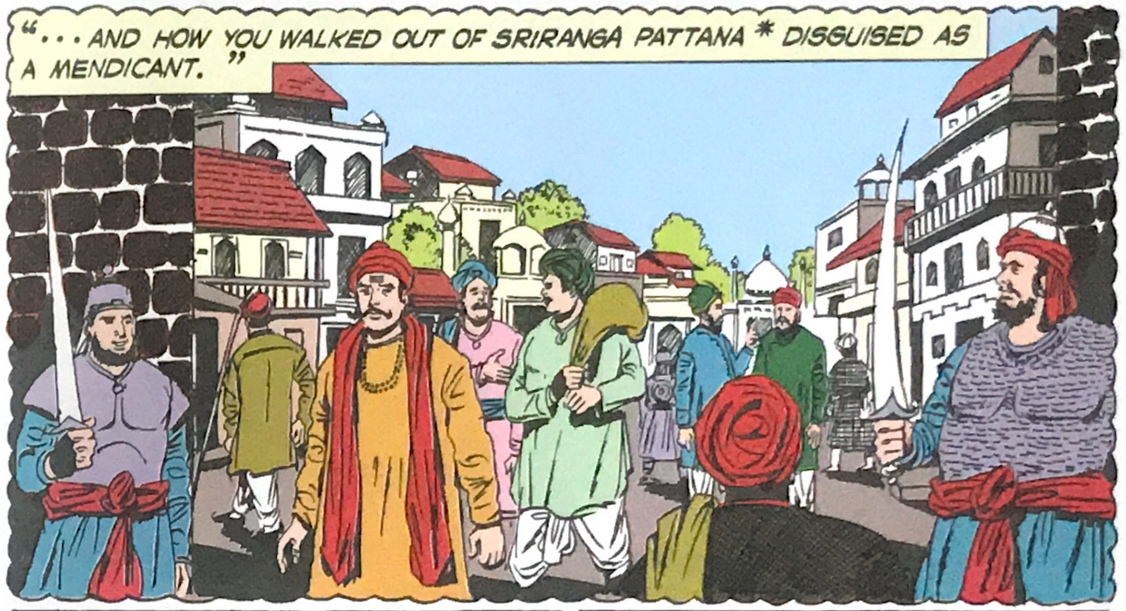
* CHIEFTAIN 卐 NEAR BELGAUM IN KARNATAKA

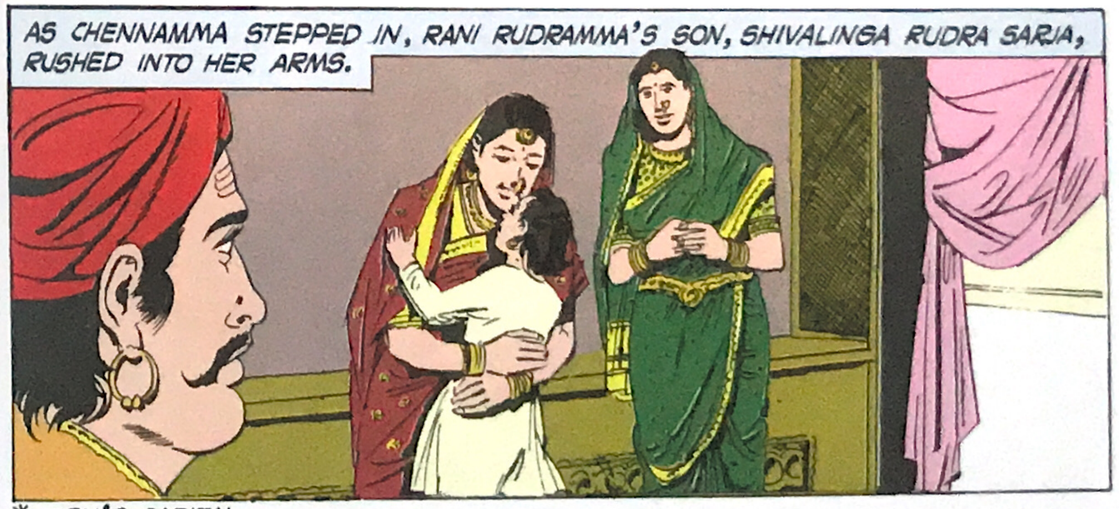




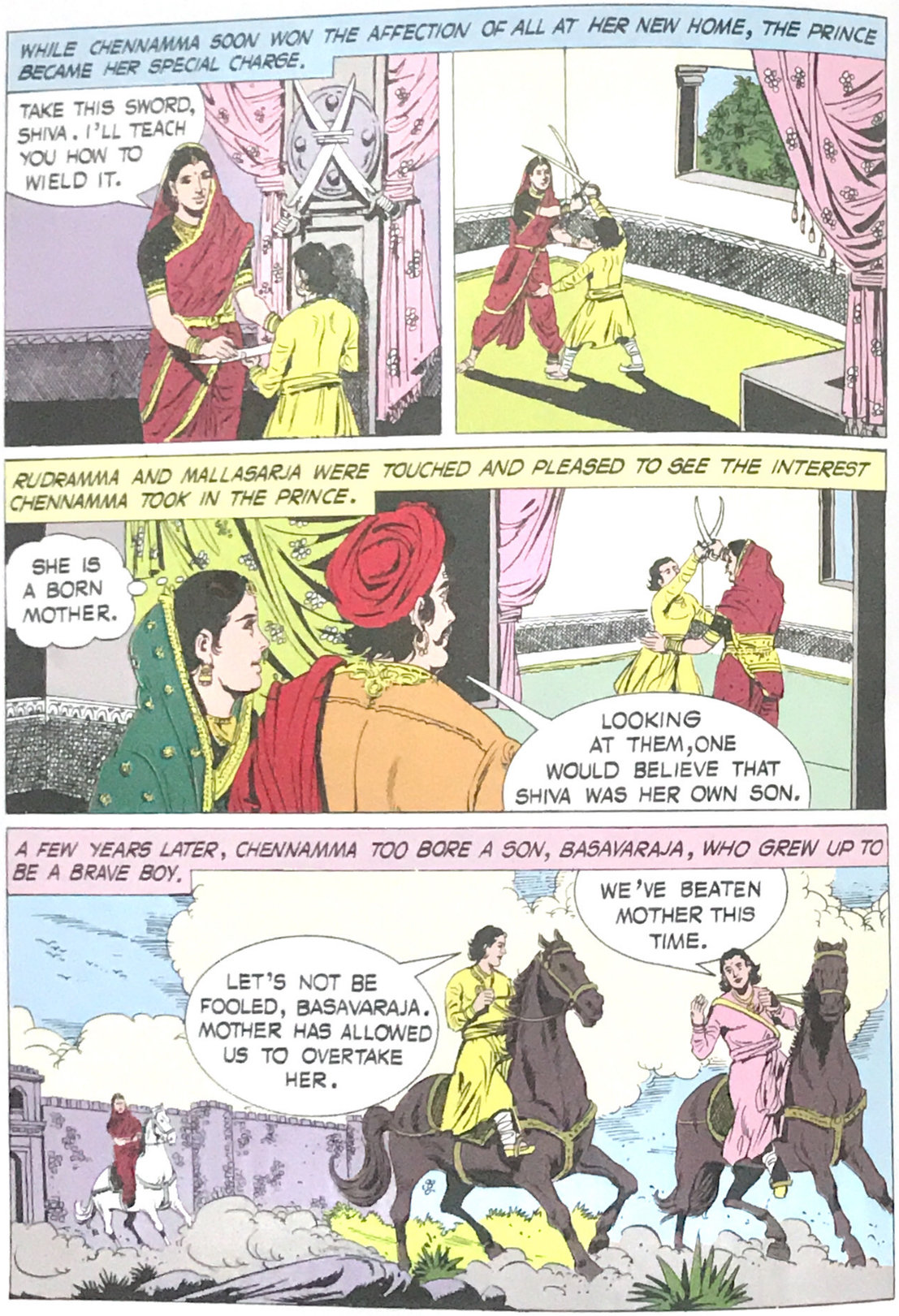


* TIPU SULTAN OF MYSORE

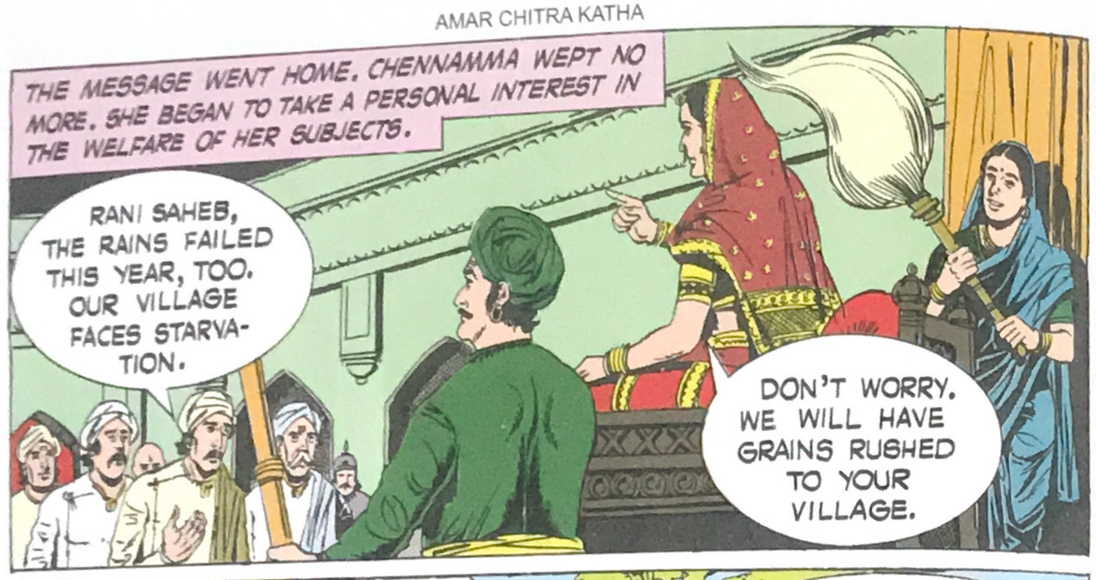




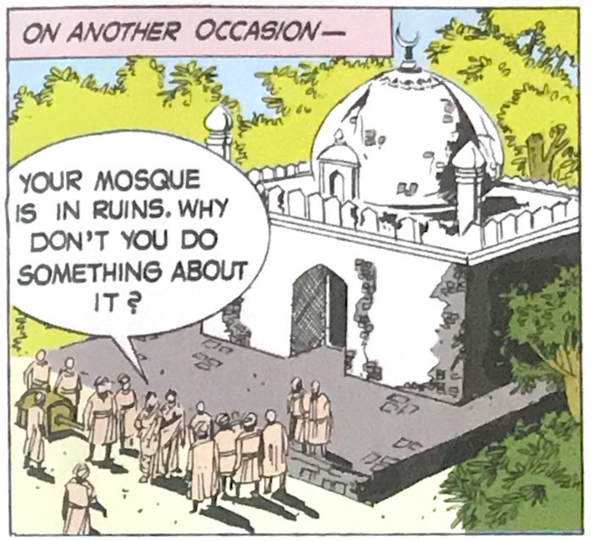
* TIPU'S CAPITAL

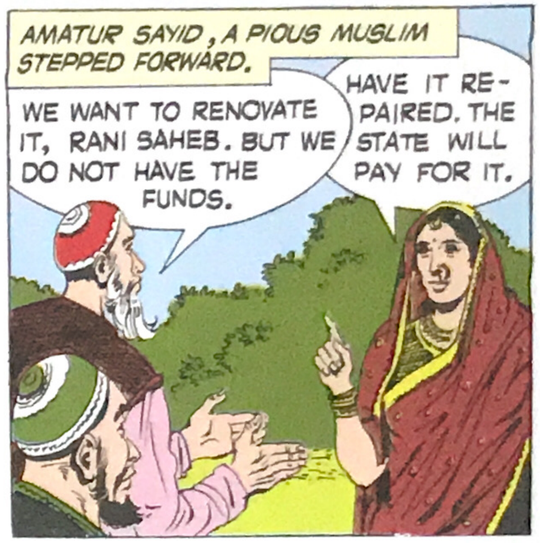

WHILE CHENNAMMA SOON WON THE AFFECTION OF ALL AT HER NEW HOME, THE PRINCE BECAME HER SPECIAL CHARGE.
TAKE THIS SWORD, SHIVA. I'LL TEACH YOU HOW TO WIELD IT.
RUDRAMMA AND MALLASARJA WERE TOUCHED AND PLEASED TO SEE THE INTEREST CHENNAMMA TOOK IN THE PRINCE.
SHE IS A BORN MOTHER.
LOOKING AT THEM, ONE WOULD BELIEVE THAT SHIVA WAS HER OWN SON.
A FEW YEARS LATER, CHENNAMMA TOO BORE A SON, BASAVARAJA, WHO GREW UP TO BE A BRAVE BOY.
LET'S NOT BE FOOLED, BASAVARAJA. MOTHER HAS ALLOWED US TO OVERTAKE HER.
WE'VE BEATEN MOTHER THIS TIME.

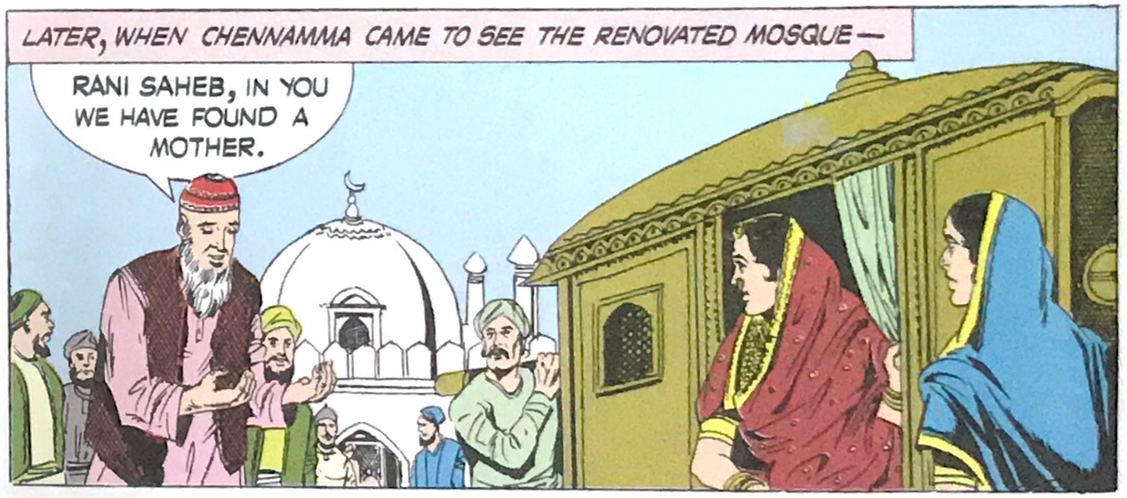
WHEN THEY CAME OF AGE, MALLASARJA ARRANGED THE WEDDING OF THE PRINCES. SHIVALINGA RUDRA SARJA MARRIED VEERAMMA AND BASAVARAJA, JANAKAMMA.
FIVE YEARS LATER, CHENNAMMA'S SON DIED.
CHENNA SITS BROODING ALL THE TIME. IT IS NOT GOOD FOR HER.
CHENNA, YOU WEEP FOR A SON WHO IS DEAD, WHILE THE REST OF YOUR CHILDREN REMAIN NEGLECTED.
CHENNAMMA WAS PERPLEXED.
THE REST OF MY CHILDREN—MY CHILDREN?
YES, CHENNA. AS THE QUEEN, ARE YOU NOT THE MOTHER OF ALL OUR SUBJECTS?

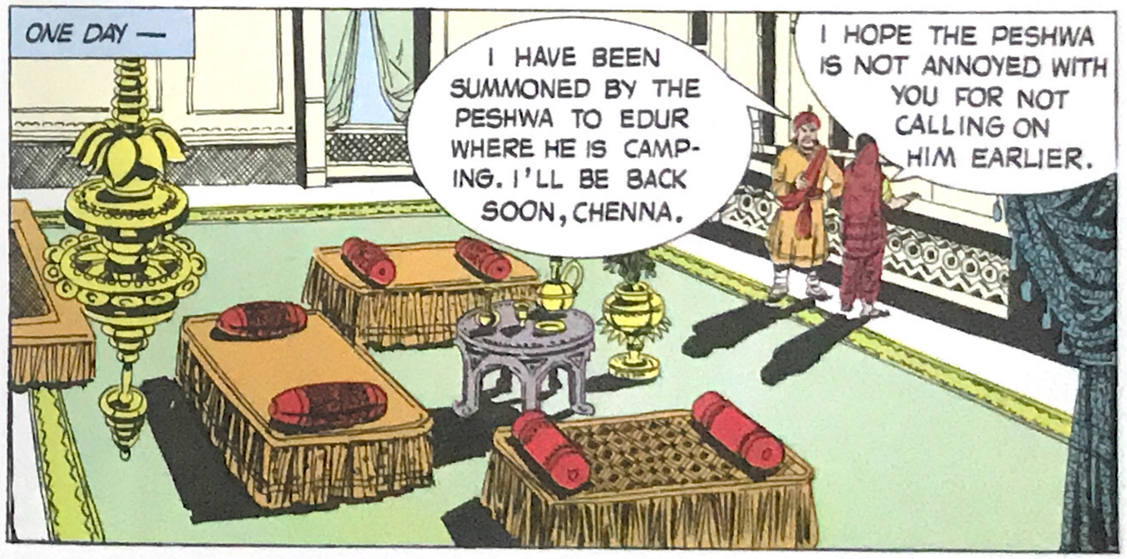


*GOA WAS THEN UNDER PORTUGUESE OCCUPATION

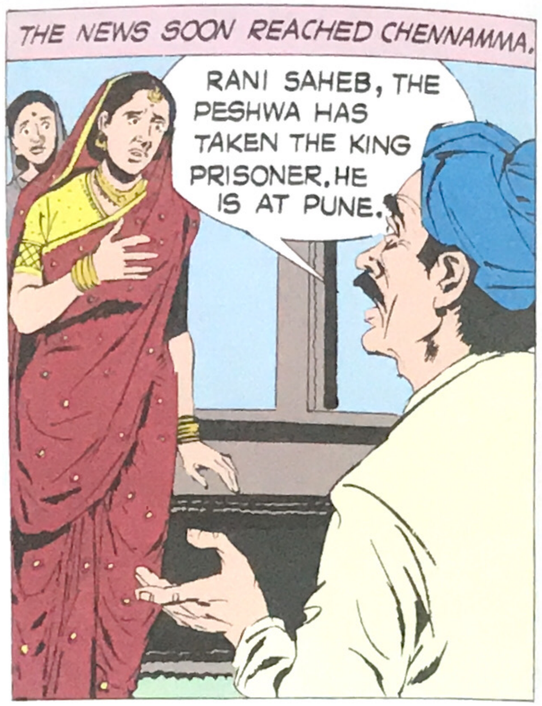




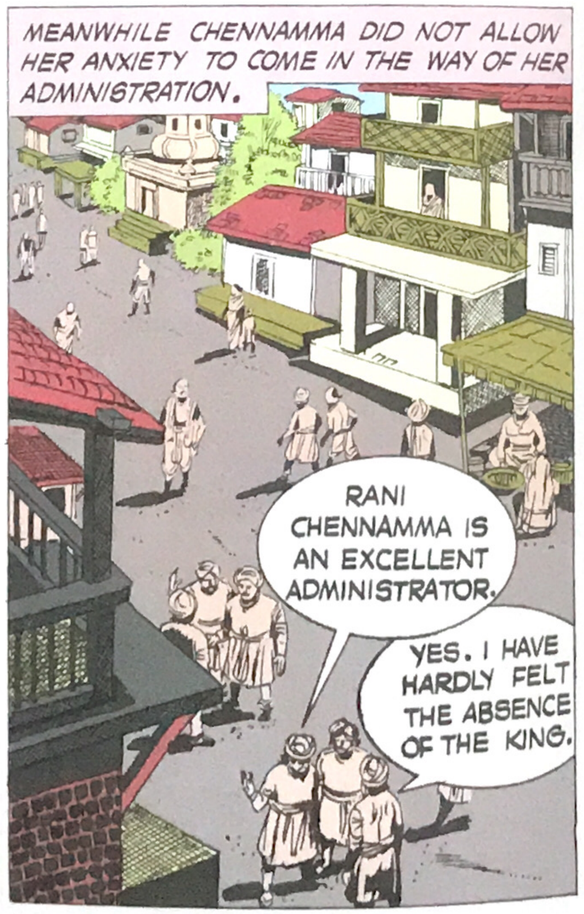




A WEEK WENT BY BUT THERE WAS NO SIGN OF MALLASARJA.
WHAT COULD BE HOLDING HIM BACK? HE HASN'T SENT A MESSAGE EITHER.
SUSPECTING THAT MALLASARJA MIGHT ASSERT HIS INDEPENDENCE, THE PESHWA HAD CAPTURED HIM AT EDUR.

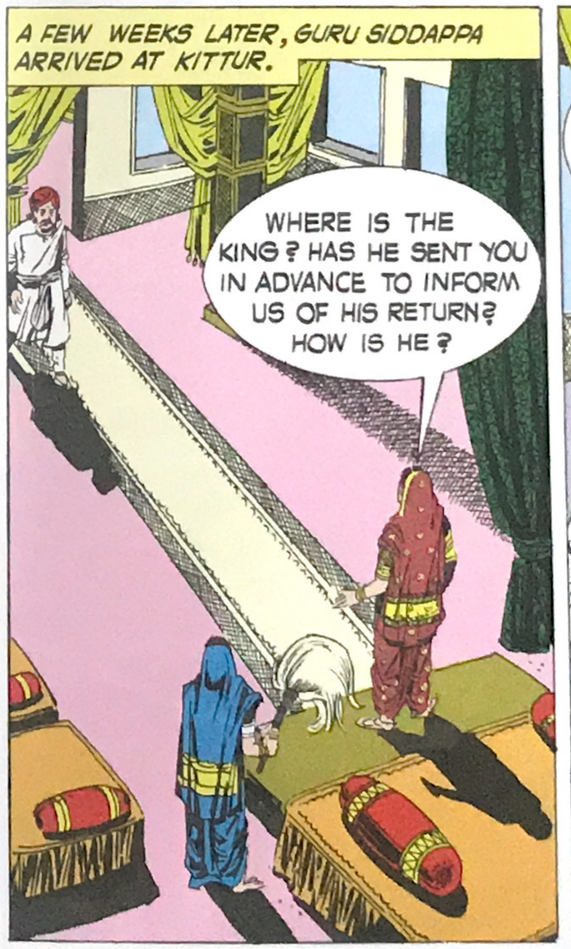

THE NEWS SOON REACHED CHENNAMMA.
RANI SAHEB, THE PESHWA HAS TAKEN THE KING PRISONER. HE IS AT PUNE.

CHENNAMMA SENT FOR GURU SIDDAPPA, A TRUSTED NOBLE.
GO TO PUNE, NEGOTIATE WITH THE PESHWA AND SECURE THE RELEASE OF THE KING.
I'LL START AT ONCE, YOUR MAJESTY.


MEANWHILE CHENNAMMA DID NOT ALLOW HER ANXIETY TO COME IN THE WAY OF HER ADMINISTRATION.
RANI CHENNAMMA IS AN EXCELLENT ADMINISTRATOR.
YES. I HAVE HARDLY FELT THE ABSENCE OF THE KING.

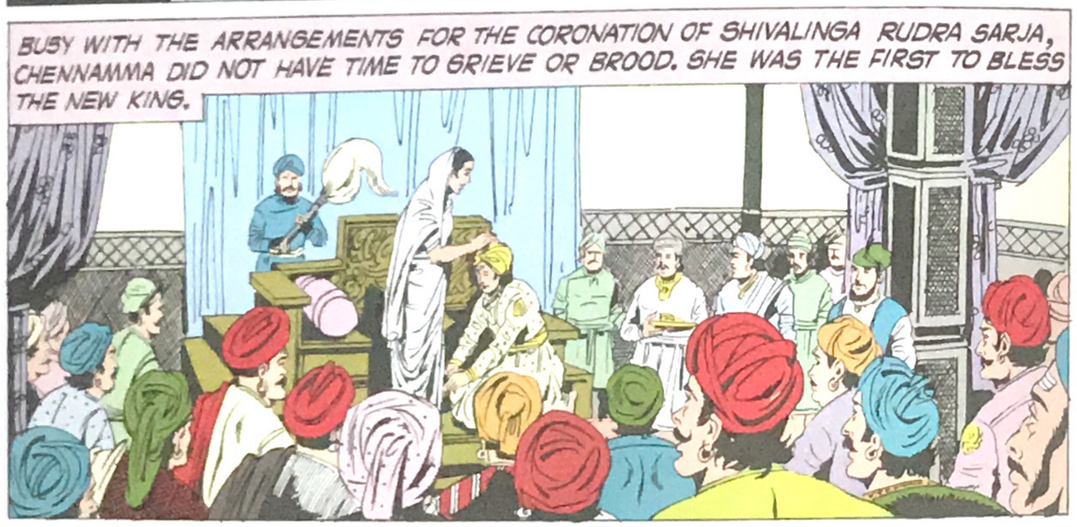
BUT WHEN SHE WAS ALONE IN THE PRIVACY OF HER CHAMBER —
WHEN WILL THE KING RETURN? IS HE ALL RIGHT? HAS GURU SIDDAPPA SUCCEEDED IN HIS MISSION?

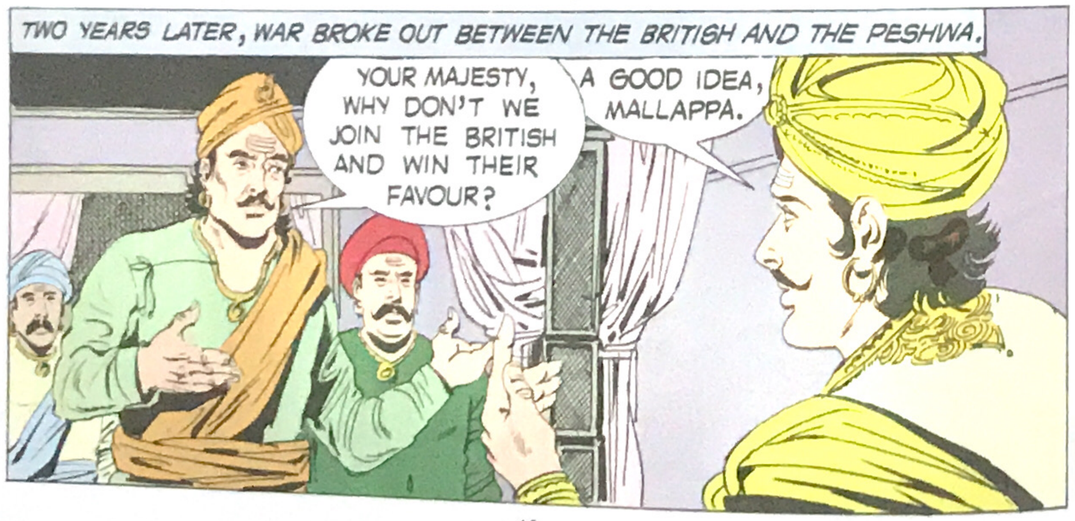
FOR THREE ANXIOUS YEARS CHENNAMMA WAITED. THEN ONE DAY —
RANI SAHEB, I COME WITH GOOD NEWS! THE KING HAS BEEN SET FREE! HE IS ON HIS WAY TO KITTUR!
GOD BLESS YOU, MY SON. GOD BLESS YOU!


A FEW WEEKS LATER, GURU SIDDAPPA ARRIVED AT KITTUR.
WHERE IS THE KING? HAS HE SENT YOU IN ADVANCE TO INFORM US OF HIS RETURN? HOW IS HE?

HE FELL SERIOUSLY ILL IN PRISON. THAT WAS WHY HE WAS SET FREE.
I SHOULD HAVE BEEN INFORMED OF HIS ILLNESS. CAN HE STAND THE JOURNEY? WHERE IS HE NOW? WHEN WILL HE REACH KITTUR?

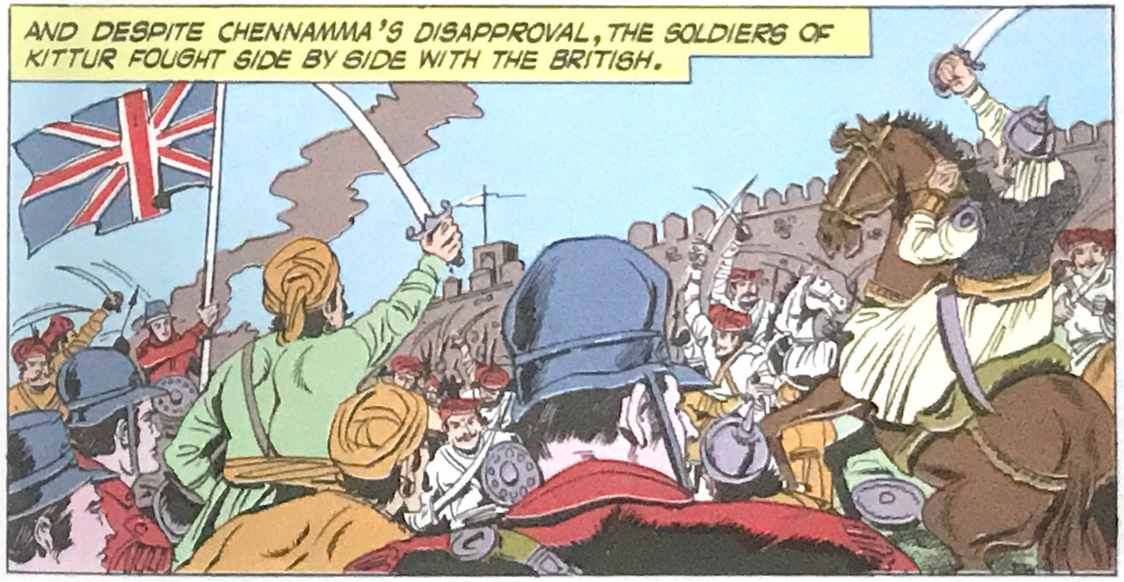
HE WILL NEVER REACH KITTUR, RANI SAHEB. HE DIED ON THE WAY.
OH, GOD!

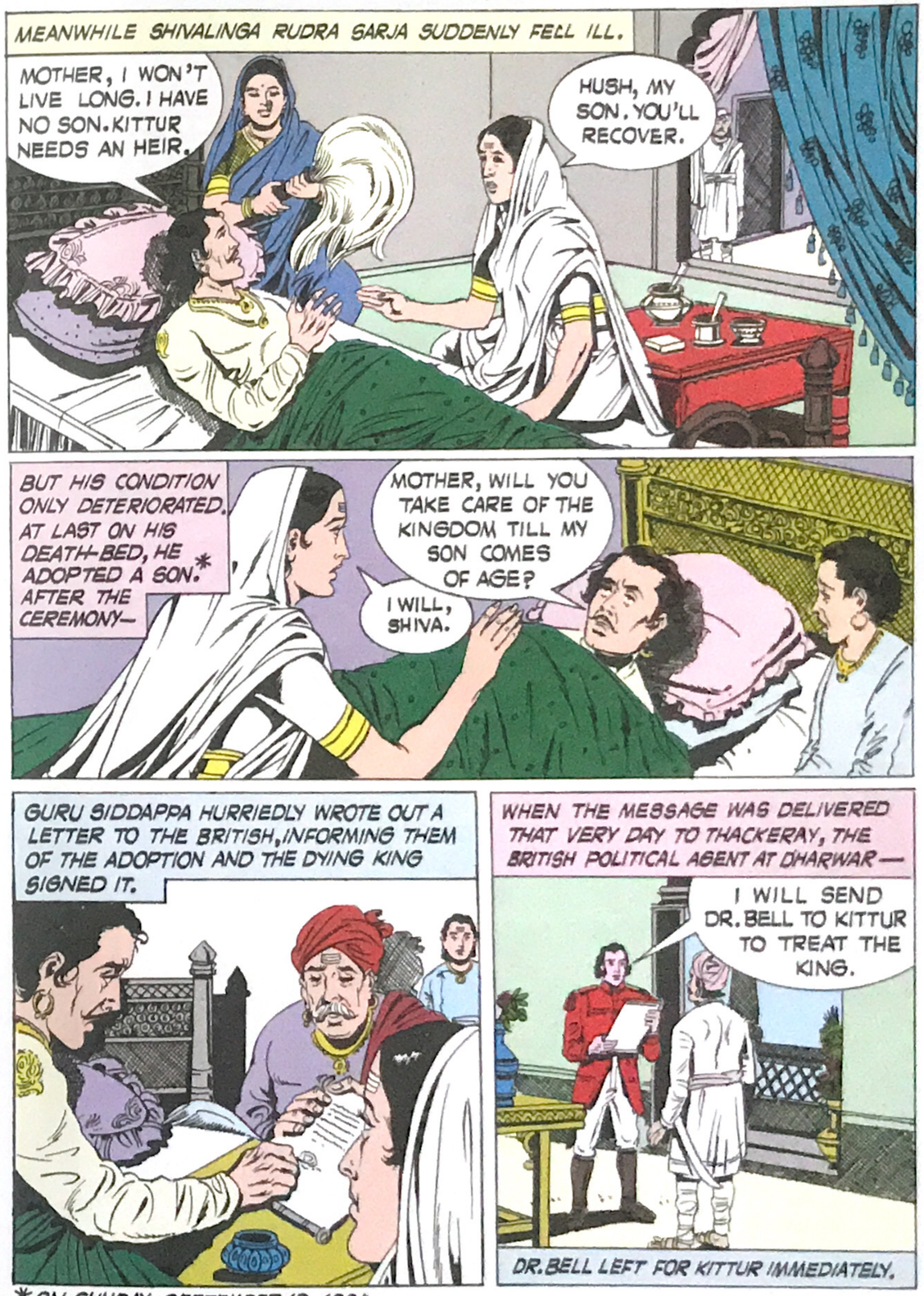

BUSY WITH THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CORONATION OF SHIVALINGA RUDRA SARJA, CHENNAMMA DID NOT HAVE TIME TO GRIEVE OR BROOD. SHE WAS THE FIRST TO BLESS THE NEW KING.


TWO YEARS LATER, WAR BROKE OUT BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND THE PESHWA.
YOUR MAJESTY, WHY DON'T WE JOIN THE BRITISH AND WIN THEIR FAVOUR?
A GOOD IDEA, MALLAPPA.

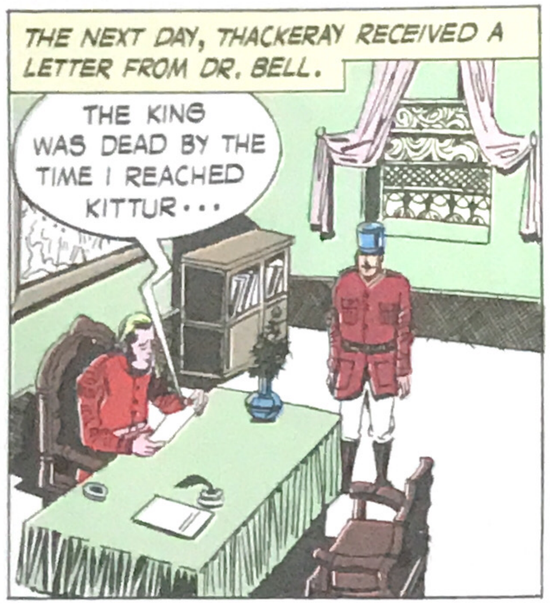
WHEN TOLD ABOUT IT, CHENNAMMA WAS SHOCKED.
SHIVA, ON NO ACCOUNT SHOULD YOU HELP THE ALIENS AGAINST OUR COUNTRY-MEN!
DON'T STOP ME, MOTHER! THE PESHWA KILLED MY FATHER. I WILL NOT LOSE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO AVENGE MY FATHER'S DEATH.

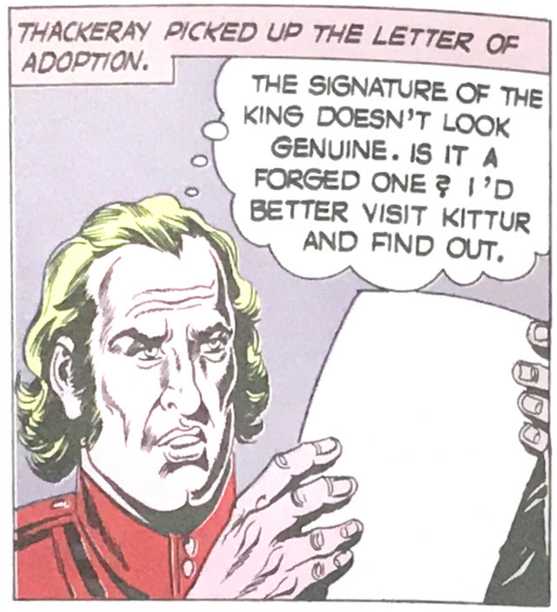
AND SHIVALINGA RUDRA SARJA SUMMONED MALLAPPA, HIS TRUSTED OFFICIAL.
INFORM THE BRITISH THAT THE FORCES OF KITTUR WILL FIGHT ON THEIR SIDE AT BELGAUM.
I WILL, YOUR MAJESTY. I'LL ALERT THE ARMY TOO.

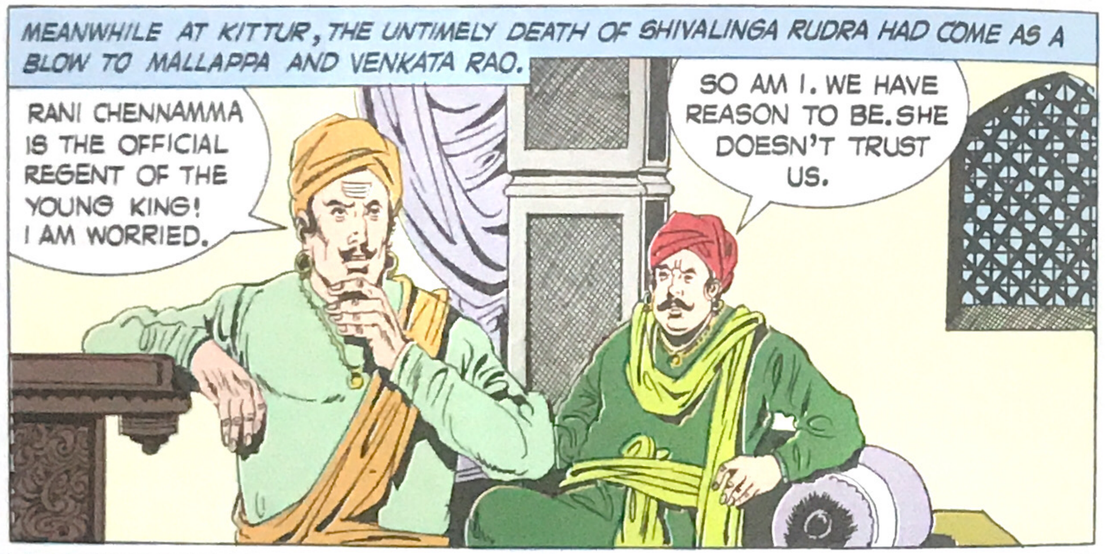

AND DESPITE CHENNAMMA'S DISAPPROVAL, THE SOLDIERS OF KITTUR FOUGHT SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE BRITISH.



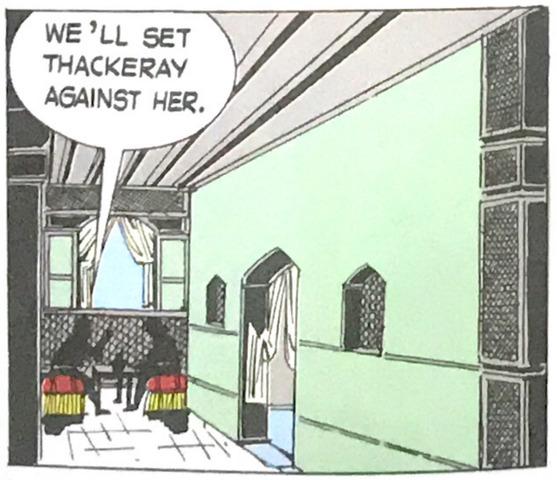
*ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1824


THE NEXT DAY, THACKERAY RECEIVED A LETTER FROM DR. BELL.
THE KING WAS DEAD BY THE TIME I REACHED KITTUR...


THACKERAY PICKED UP THE LETTER OF ADOPTION.
THE SIGNATURE OF THE KING DOESN'T LOOK GENUINE. IS IT A FORGED ONE? I'D BETTER VISIT KITTUR AND FIND OUT.


MEANWHILE AT KITTUR, THE UNTIMELY DEATH OF SHIVALINGA RUDRA HAD COME AS A BLOW TO MALLAPPA AND VENKATA RAO.
RANI CHENNAMMA IS THE OFFICIAL REGENT OF THE YOUNG KING! I AM WORRIED.
SO AM I. WE HAVE REASON TO BE. SHE DOESN'T TRUST US.

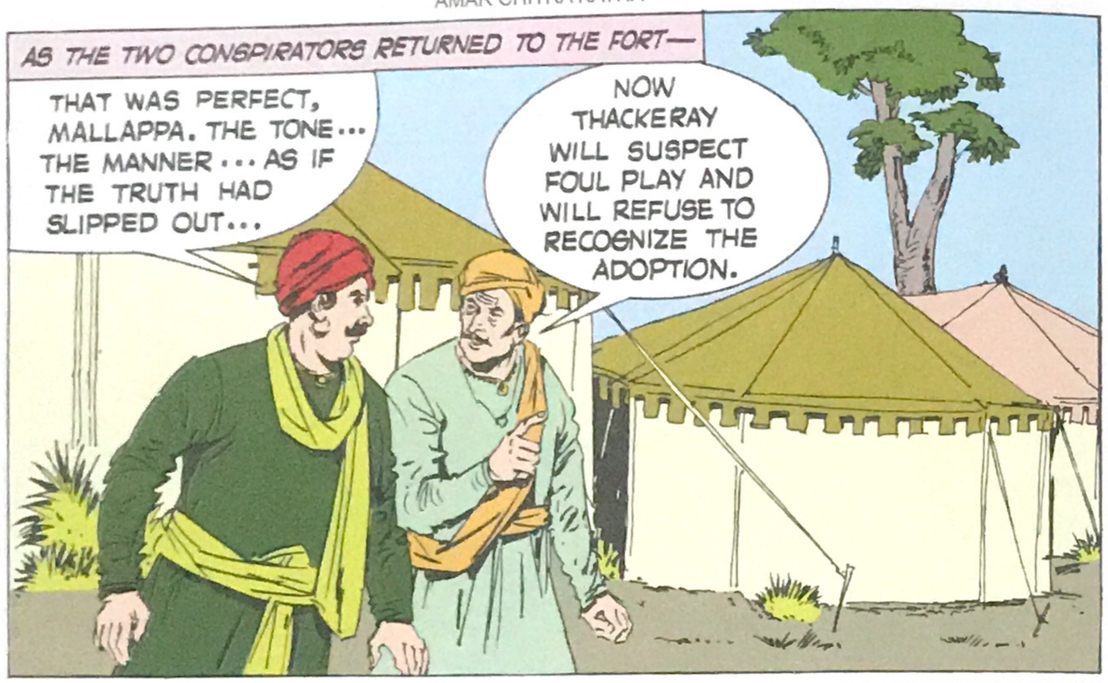
WE'LL HAVE TO GET RID OF HER BEFORE SHE GETS RID OF US.
HOW?


WE'LL SET THACKERAY AGAINST HER.

WHEN THACKERAY CAME TO KITTUR, THE TWO CONSPIRATORS CALLED ON HIM.
YOU'VE COME AT THE RIGHT TIME, SIR. THERE IS ANARCHY BREWING IN THE STATE.
THE KING IS BUT A LITTLE BOY; THE REGENT A WOMAN.

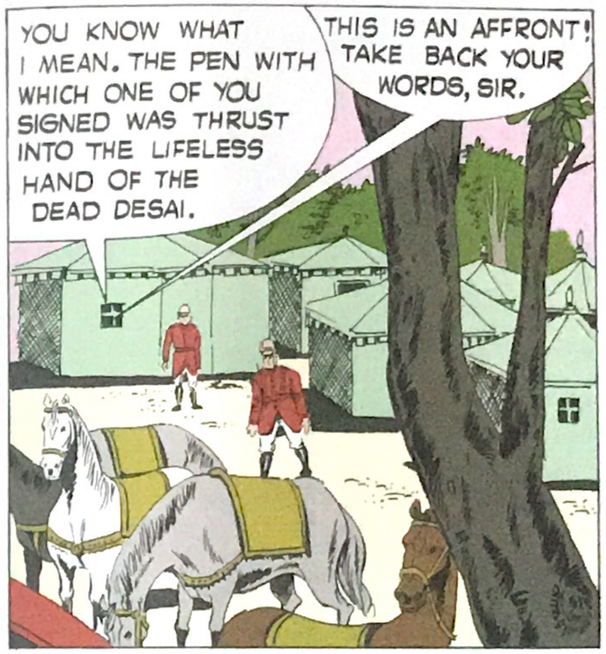
THE PURPOSE OF MY VISIT IS TO STUDY THE SITUATION HERE. TELL ME, MALLAPPA, WHEN DID THE KING DIE?

ON SATURDAY... EVENING... NO... NO... IT WAS SUNDAY!
ENOUGH! YOU MAY GO NOW.

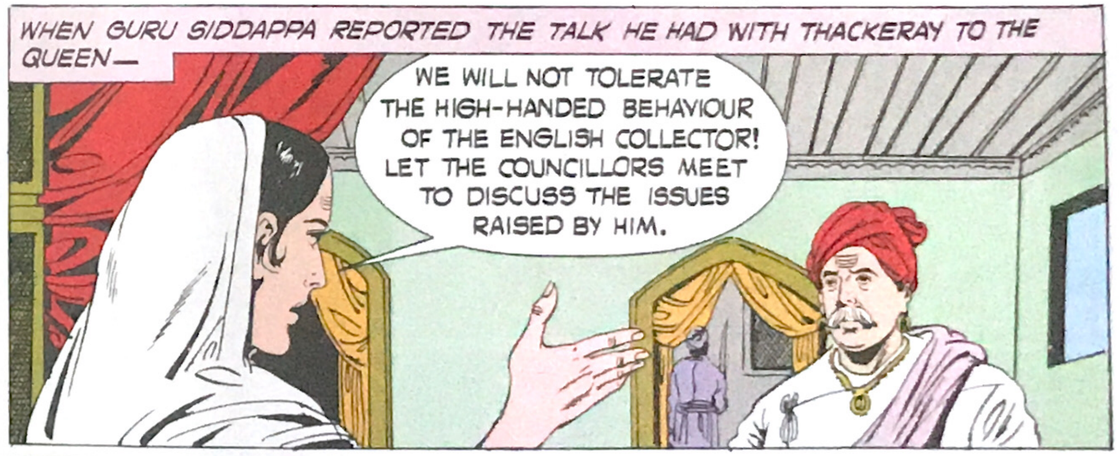

AS THE TWO CONSPIRATORS RETURNED TO THE FORT—
THAT WAS PERFECT, MALLAPPA. THE TONE... THE MANNER... AS IF THE TRUTH HAD SLIPPED OUT...
NOW THACKERAY WILL SUSPECT FOUL PLAY AND WILL REFUSE TO RECOGNIZE THE ADOPTION.

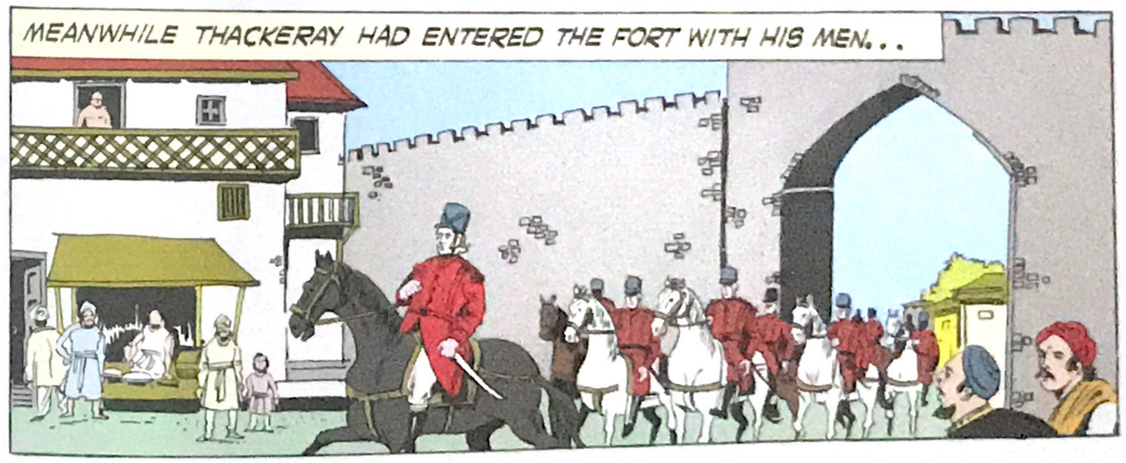
LATER, WHEN GURU SIDDAPPA CALLED ON THACKERAY—
DON'T YOU KNOW THAT WE DO NOT RECOGNIZE AN ADOPTION UNLESS OUR PRIOR APPROVAL IS TAKEN?
THERE WAS NO TIME, SIR. THE KING WAS ON HIS DEATH-BED AND...

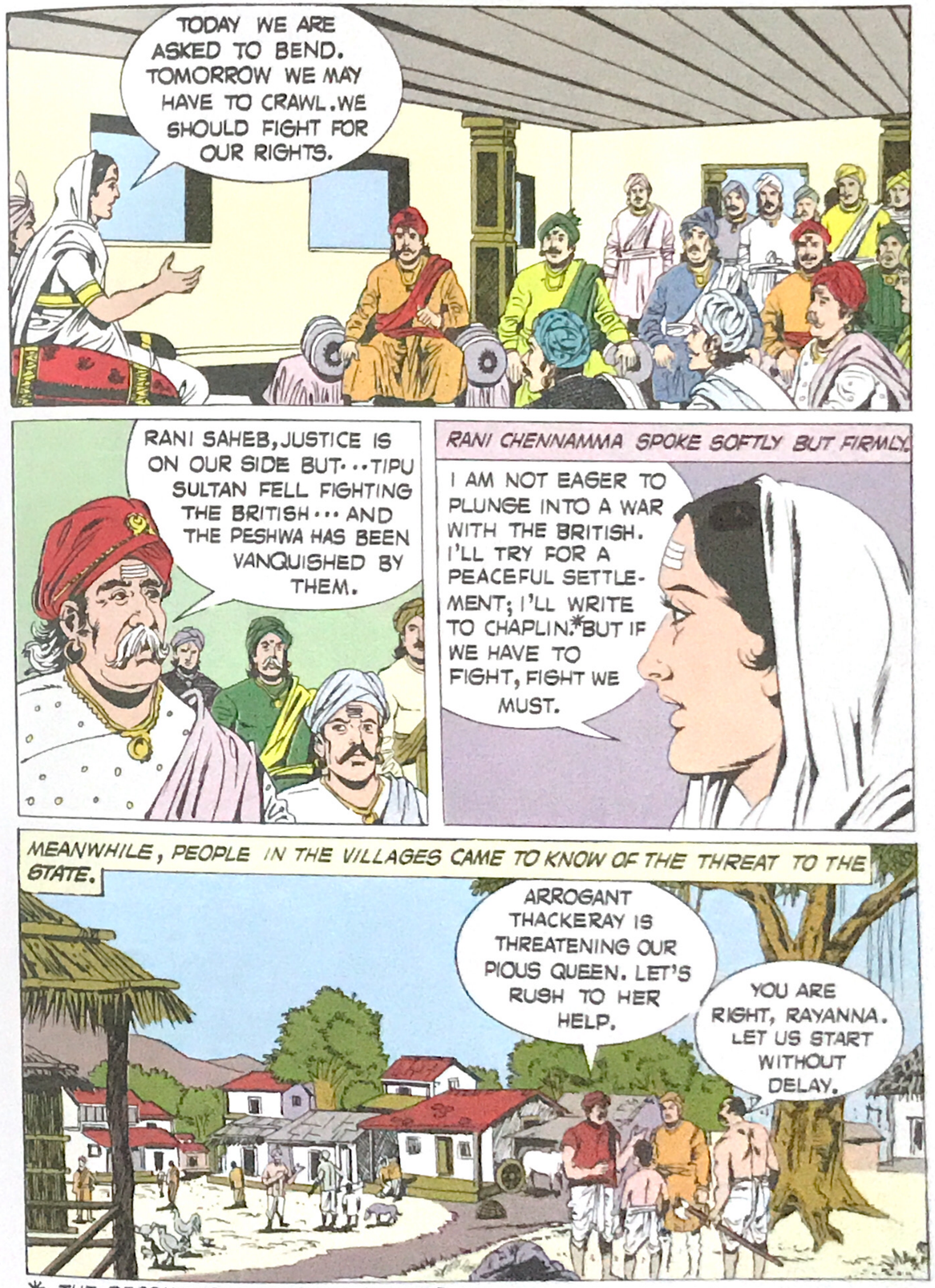
AND HE DIED BY THE TIME YOU GOT THE LETTER OF ADOPTION READY!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SIR?


YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. THE PEN WITH WHICH ONE OF YOU SIGNED WAS THRUST INTO THE LIFELESS HAND OF THE DEAD DESAI.
THIS IS AN AFFRONT! TAKE BACK YOUR WORDS, SIR.

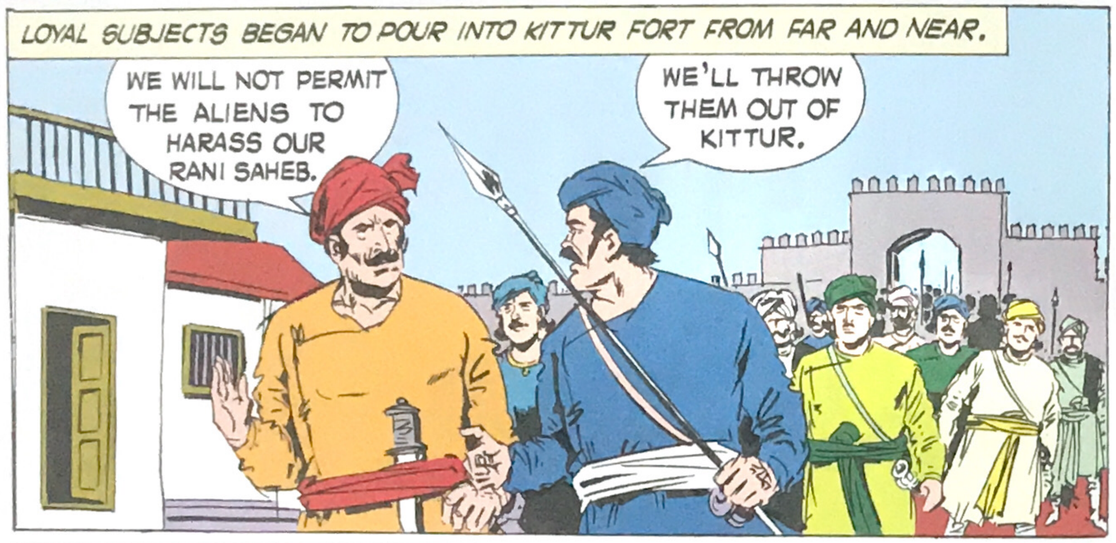
THACKERAY REMAINED ADAMANT.
I'LL SEND MY REPORT TO MR.CHAPLIN. MEANWHILE, I WANT LAW AND ORDER TO BE MAINTAINED IN KITTUR.
WE HAVE NEVER NEEDED YOUR HELP FOR THAT AND WE DON'T NEED IT NOW!

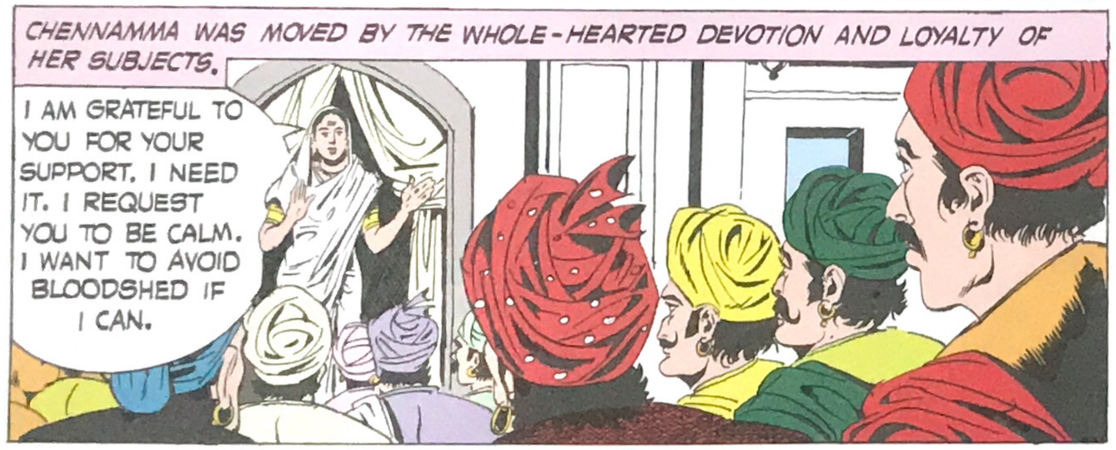

WHEN GURU SIDDAPPA REPORTED THE TALK HE HAD WITH THACKERAY TO THE QUEEN—
WE WILL NOT TOLERATE THE HIGH-HANDED BEHAVIOUR OF THE ENGLISH COLLECTOR! LET THE COUNCILLORS MEET TO DISCUSS THE ISSUES RAISED BY HIM.

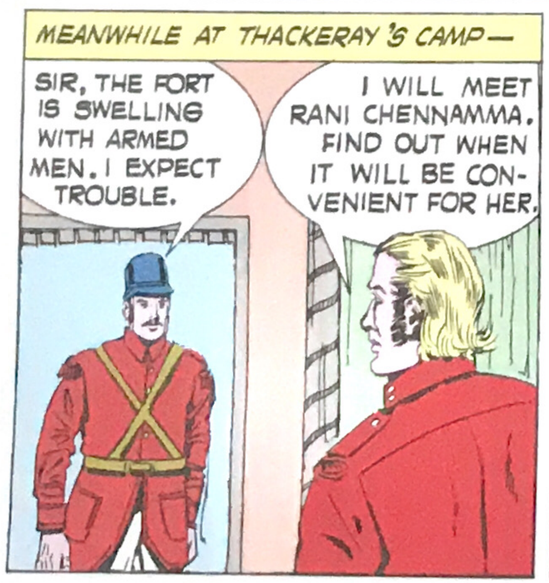

MEANWHILE THACKERAY HAD ENTERED THE FORT WITH HIS MEN...



* THE DECCAN COMMISSIONER AT PUNE

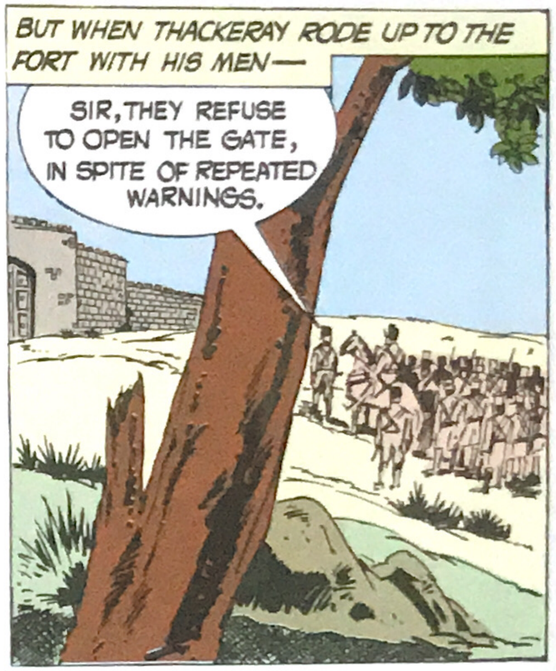

LOYAL SUBJECTS BEGAN TO POUR INTO KITTUR FORT FROM FAR AND NEAR.
WE WILL NOT PERMIT THE ALIENS TO HARASS OUR RANI SAHEB.
WE'LL THROW THEM OUT OF KITTUR.


CHENNAMMA WAS MOVED BY THE WHOLE-HEARTED DEVOTION AND LOYALTY OF HER SUBJECTS.
I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT. I NEED IT. I REQUEST YOU TO BE CALM. I WANT TO AVOID BLOODSHED IF I CAN.


MEANWHILE AT THACKERAY'S CAMP—
SIR, THE FORT IS SWELLING WITH ARMED MEN. I EXPECT TROUBLE.
I WILL MEET RANI CHENNAMMA. FIND OUT WHEN IT WILL BE CONVENIENT FOR HER.

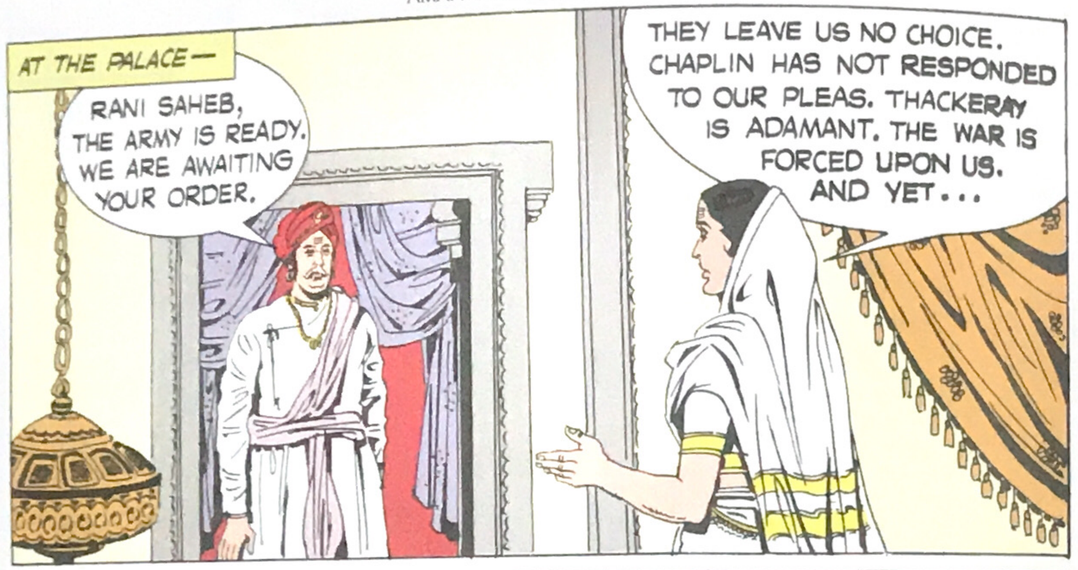
AFTER SOME TIME THE OFFICER RETURNED.
RANI CHENNAMMA HAS DECLINED TO MEET YOU, SIR. SHE SAID IT WILL SERVE NO USEFUL PURPOSE.

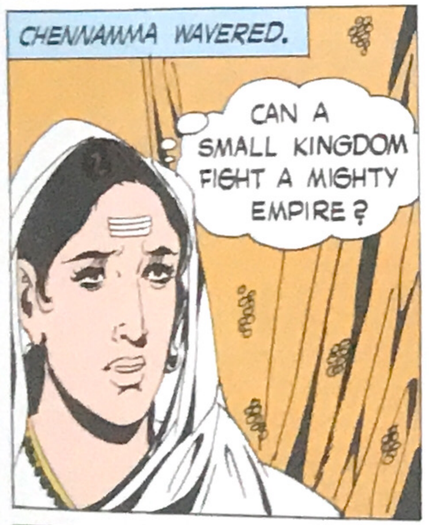
THE NEXT DAY—
SIR, THEY HAVE CLOSED THE GATE OF THE FORT AND NO COUNCILLOR IS PREPARED TO MEET US.
THEN LET'S MARCH TO THE FORT.

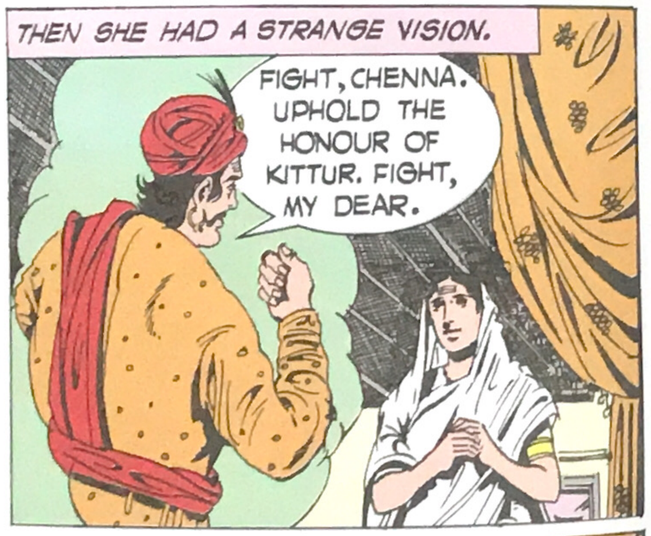

BUT WHEN THACKERAY RODE UP TO THE FORT WITH HIS MEN—
SIR, THEY REFUSE TO OPEN THE GATE, IN SPITE OF REPEATED WARNINGS.

CAPTAIN BLACK, GET YOUR CANNONS HERE. IF THEY WON'T RESPOND TO OUR POLITE REQUESTS, WE'LL COERCE THEM. IF THEY DON'T OPEN THE GATE, WE'LL BLAST IT OPEN.

THE CANNONS WERE STATIONED IN FRONT OF THE GATE. THACKERAY ISSUED THE FINAL WARNING.
WE'LL GIVE YOU TWENTY-FOUR MINUTES. IF THE GATE IS NOT OPENED BY THEN, WE'LL LAUNCH A CANNONADE.

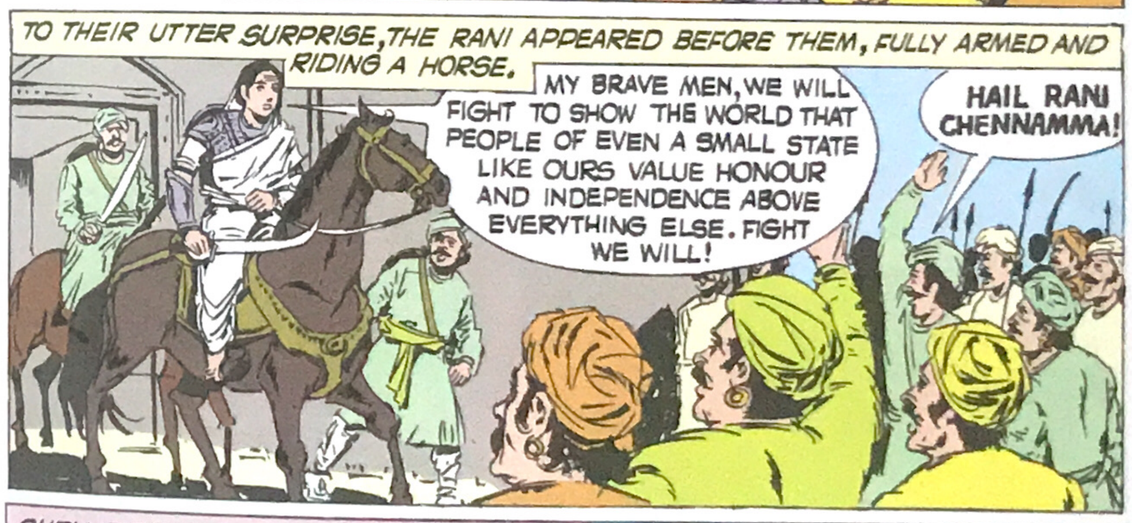

AT THE PALACE—
RANI SAHEB, THE ARMY IS READY. WE ARE AWAITING YOUR ORDER.
THEY LEAVE US NO CHOICE. CHAPLIN HAS NOT RESPONDED TO OUR PLEAS. THACKERAY IS ADAMANT. THE WAR IS FORCED UPON US. AND YET...

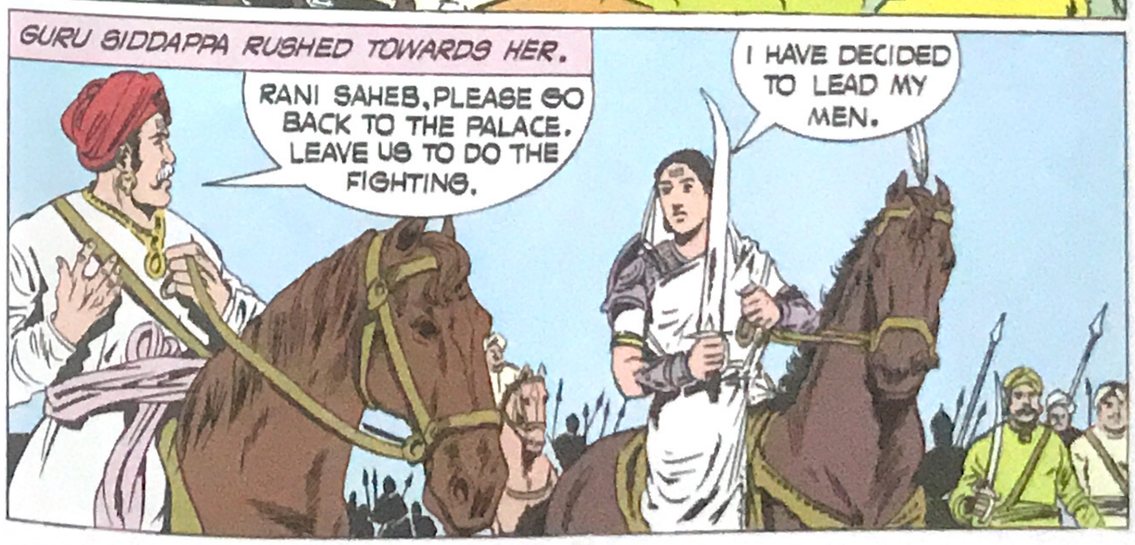

CHENNAMMA WAVERED.
CAN A SMALL KINGDOM FIGHT A MIGHTY EMPIRE?


THEN SHE HAD A STRANGE VISION.
FIGHT, CHENNA. UPHOLD THE HONOUR OF KITTUR. FIGHT, MY DEAR.

TIME IS RUNNING OUT, RANI SAHEB!
I AM READY, GURU SIDDAPPA. I'LL PERSONALLY ANNOUNCE MY DECISION TO THE PEOPLE.

MEANWHILE THE SOLDIERS OF KITTUR WERE GETTING RESTLESS.
WHY DOES RANI SAHEB HESITATE?


TO THEIR UTTER SURPRISE, THE RANI APPEARED BEFORE THEM, FULLY ARMED AND RIDING A HORSE.
MY BRAVE MEN, WE WILL FIGHT TO SHOW THE WORLD THAT PEOPLE OF EVEN A SMALL STATE LIKE OURS VALUE HONOUR AND INDEPENDENCE ABOVE EVERYTHING ELSE. FIGHT WE WILL!
HAIL RANI CHENNAMMA!


GURU SIDDAPPA RUSHED TOWARDS HER.
RANI SAHEB, PLEASE GO BACK TO THE PALACE. LEAVE US TO DO THE FIGHTING.
I HAVE DECIDED TO LEAD MY MEN.

MEANWHILE THACKERAY'S MEN WERE WAITING PATIENTLY.
THEY WILL OPEN THE GATE.

SEE WHAT DID I SAY?
WE HAVE WON— WITHOUT A SHOT BEING FIRED!

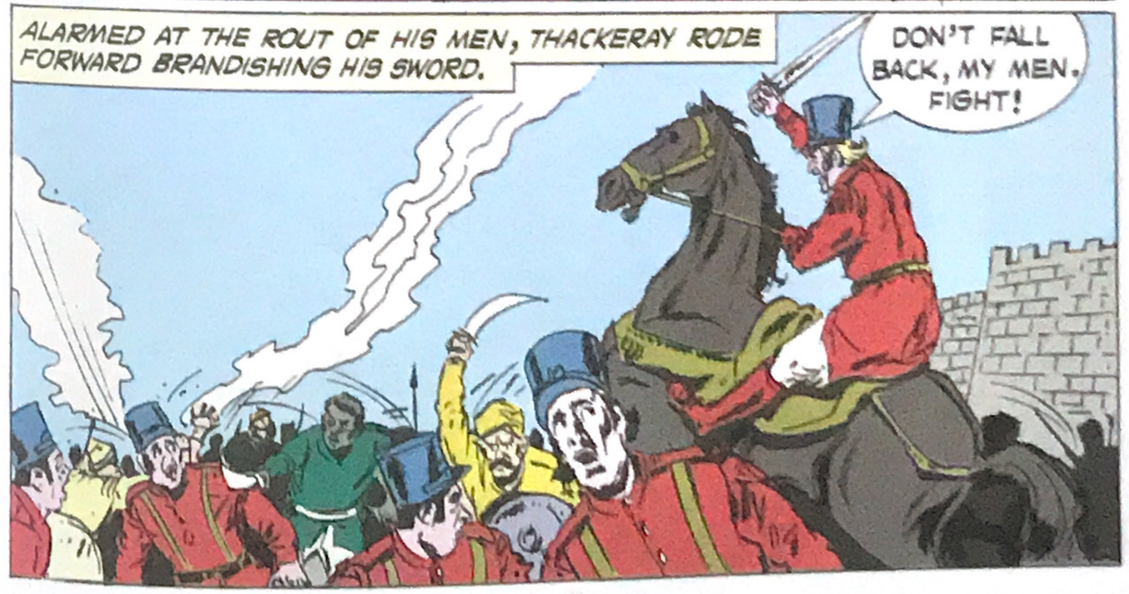
BUT TO THEIR GREAT SURPRISE, CHENNAMMA'S SOLDIERS POURED OUT OF THE FORT SHOUTING WAR CRIES.
RANI CHENNAMMA KI JAI!
HAR HAR MAHDEV*!

*A WAR CRY

RANI CHENNAMMA WAS THE FIRST TO STRIKE.

AN AFRICAN IMMIGRANT, FIGHTING FOR CHENNAMMA, CAUSED HAVOC IN THE BRITISH ARMY.

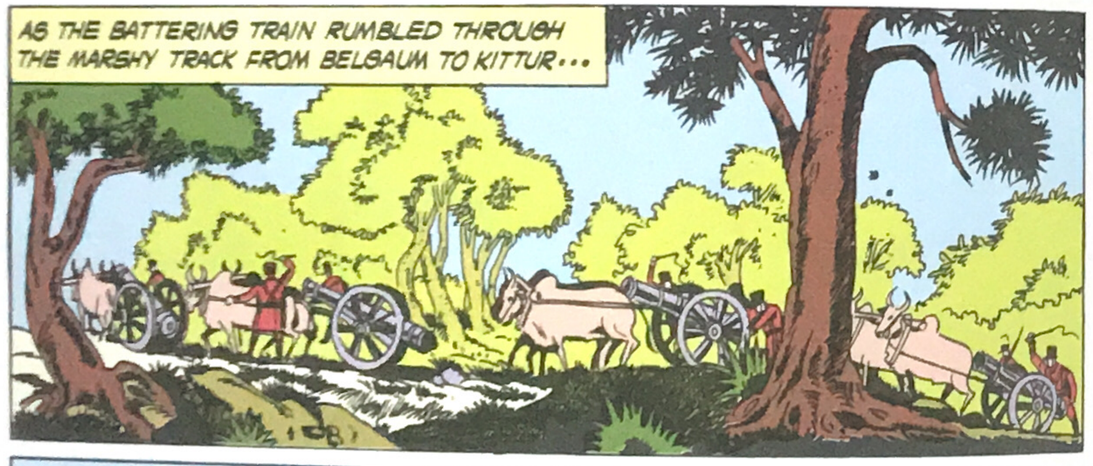
RUN!


ALARMED AT THE ROUT OF HIS MEN, THACKERAY RODE FORWARD BRANDISHING HIS SWORD.
DON'T FALL BACK, MY MEN. FIGHT!

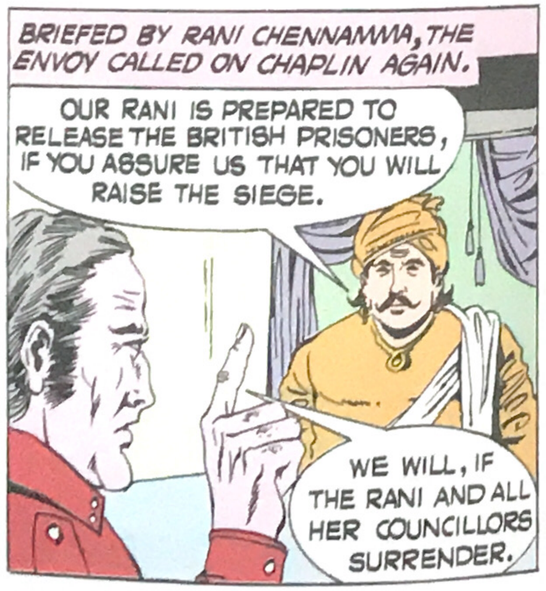
WHEN SAYID BALAPPA, A MUSLIM BODYGUARD OF CHENNAMMA TOOK AIM AT THACKERAY—
NO, BALAPPA! NOT HIM!
BUT BALAPPA HAD ALREADY PRESSED THE TRIGGER.
AS THACKERAY FELL, GURU SIDDAPPA, RAYANNA AND OTHER VETERANS SWOOPED DOWN ON THE RETREATING ENEMY...
...AND SEVERAL OF THEM WERE TAKEN PRISONERS.

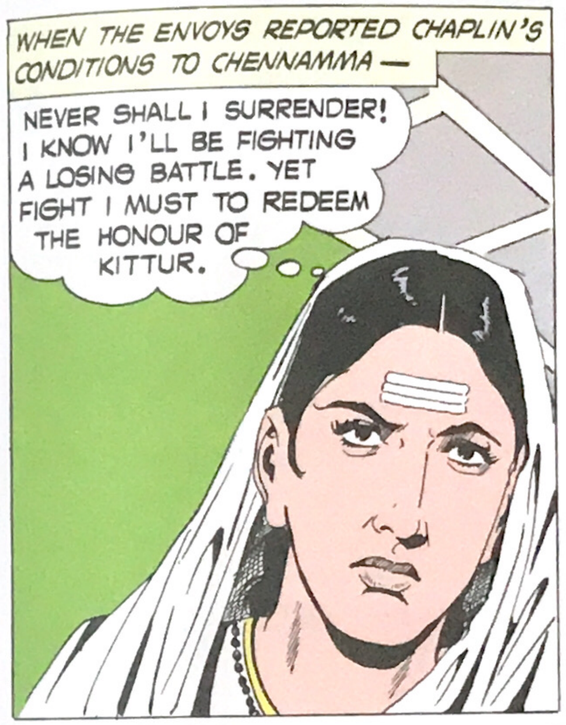
FOR THE CHEERING CROWD, CHENNAMMA HAD A WORD OF CAUTION.
NOW WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE PATH OF CONFRONTATION WITH THE BRITISH. THIS VICTORY OF OURS IS NOT THE DECISIVE ONE. WE MUST BE VIGILANT.
THE VICTORY OF RANI CHENNAMMA CAME AS A BLOW TO THE BRITISH. CHAPLIN, THE DECCAN COMMISSIONER RUSHED FROM PUNE TO BELGAUM AND HELD TALKS WITH THE COMMANDING OFFICERS.
A WOMAN HAS HUMBLED OUR PRIDE. SHE MUST BE CRUSHED.
YES, SIR. IF KITTUR GOES UNPUNISHED THE OTHER INDIAN STATES ALSO MAY REBEL.
RALLY OUR FORCES AND CAPTURE KITTUR.
THE BRITISH FORCES FROM BOMBAY AND MADRAS ARRIVED AT KITTUR AND LAID SIEGE TO THE FORT.
OUR TASK WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH EASIER IF MALLAPPA AND VENKATA RAO WERE ALIVE. THE RANI FOUND OUT THEIR TREACHERY AND HAD THEM PUT TO DEATH.
WHAT IF THEY ARE DEAD? THERE MUST BE MANY SUCH.

CHAPLIN WAS NOT YET READY TO FIRE THE FIRST SHOT.
I'LL STALL FOR TIME TILL PEARS JOINS ME WITH HIS BATTERING TRAIN. NO HARM IN CARRYING ON NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE RANI TILL THEN.

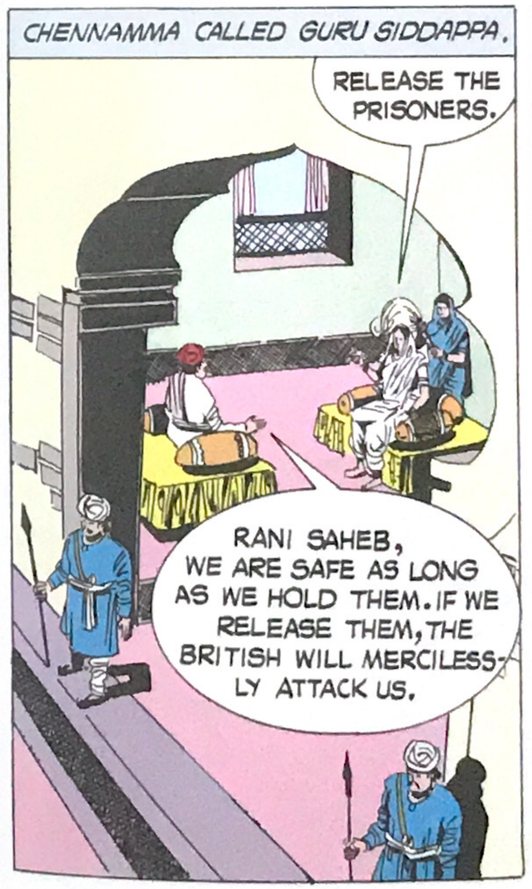

AS THE BATTERING TRAIN RUMBLED THROUGH THE MARSHY TRACK FROM BELGAUM TO KITTUR...

...CHAPLIN NEGOTIATED WITH CHENNAMMA'S ENVOY.
THE RANI MUST FIRST SET HER ENGLISH PRISONERS FREE. ONLY THEN CAN THERE BE ANY TALK OF PEACE.


BRIEFED BY RANI CHENNAMMA, THE ENVOY CALLED ON CHAPLIN AGAIN.
OUR RANI IS PREPARED TO RELEASE THE BRITISH PRISONERS, IF YOU ASSURE US THAT YOU WILL RAISE THE SIEGE.
WE WILL, IF THE RANI AND ALL HER COUNCILLORS SURRENDER.


WHEN THE ENVOYS REPORTED CHAPLIN'S CONDITIONS TO CHENNAMMA —
NEVER SHALL I SURRENDER! I KNOW I'LL BE FIGHTING A LOSING BATTLE. YET FIGHT I MUST TO REDEEM THE HONOUR OF KITTUR.

AS SOON AS THE BATTERY TRAIN ARRIVED, CHAPLIN ISSUED A FINAL WARNING.
IF THE PRISONERS ARE NOT RELEASED AND THE FORT IS NOT SURRENDERED BEFORE TEN TOMORROW MORNING, THE FIRING WILL BEGIN...


CHENNAMMA CALLED GURU SIDDAPPA.
RELEASE THE PRISONERS.
RANI SAHEB, WE ARE SAFE AS LONG AS WE HOLD THEM. IF WE RELEASE THEM, THE BRITISH WILL MERCILESSLY ATTACK US.

I REALISE THAT. I DON'T WANT TO TAKE COVER BEHIND THE BRITISH PRISONERS. RELEASE THEM AND ASK OUR MEN TO BE PREPARED TO FIGHT TO A FINISH.

THE PRISONERS WALKED OUT OF THE FORT. TWO OF THEM, STEVENSON AND ELIOT CALLED ON CHAPLIN.
SIR, WE WERE TREATED WELL BY THE RANI. SHE WANTS FRIENDSHIP WITH THE BRITISH. AVOID BLOODSHED, SIR.
IT IS TOO LATE NOW, TO TALK OF PEACE.
AS THE BRITISH TROOPS ADVANCED, CHENNAMMA'S MEN OPENED FIRE.
THE BRITISH CANNONS KEPT FIRING INCESSANTLY AND THE NEXT DAY A PORTION OF THE FORT WAS BLOWN UP.

THE ENEMY POURED INTO THE FORT AND A FIERCE BATTLE FOLLOWED.
CHENNAMMA LOST HEAVILY AND WAS FINALLY TAKEN PRISONER.
MY ONLY REGRET IS THAT I COULDN'T DIE FIGHTING ON THE BATTLEFIELD.
BEFORE SHE LEFT KITTUR, SHE TOOK ONE LAST LOOK AT HER FORT.
THE BRITISH FLAG ATOP OUR FORT! I WILL KNOW PEACE ONLY WHEN THE SHACKLE OF SLAVERY IS BROKEN. GOD HELP KITTUR, HELP MY COUNTRY!
CHENNAMMA WAS TAKEN TO BAILAHONGALA FORT WHERE FIVE YEARS LATER, SHE DIED. EVEN TO THIS DAY THE PEOPLE OF KITTUR SING ABOUT THEIR VALOROUS QUEEN WHO WAS AMONG THE FIRST TO RESIST THE BRITISH RULE IN INDIA – A FORERUNNER OF THE RANI OF JHANSI.